

# The Old Lady in Point Lace

A GOOD example of the manner in which a composite thought-form of the past manifests itself upon the living present was recorded some years ago in the *Wide World Magazine*, which I have every reason to believe is founded on fact, though the name given, Grace Dundas, is a pseudonym, and the events occurred twenty years ago.

In this very dramatic case a lady with her children occupied a lonely house on the Cornish coast, and was much disturbed by a ghostly visitor who passed with a heavy tread up the stairs at a certain hour of the night, disappearing into a panel in the landing. The lady had the courage to lie in wait for him, and perceived him to be a small, aged man in a shabby tweed suit, carrying his boots in his hand. He emitted "a sort of yellow luminous light."

This creature ascended at one A. M., and emerged again at 4.30, descending the stair with the same audible tread. The lady kept the matter to herself, but a nurse who was brought to tend one of the children came screaming in the middle of the night to say that there was "a dreadful old man" in the house. She had descended to the dining-room to get some water for her patient, and had seen him seated in a chair and taking off his boots. He was seen by his own light, for she had not had time to strike a match.

The lady's brother and her husband both corroborated the phenomena, and the latter went very thoroughly into the matter. He found that under the house was a cellar which opened into a cave up which the water came at full tide. It was an ideal situation for a smuggler.

THAT night the husband and wife kept watch in the cellar, where they saw a very terrible spectacle. In a light resembling that of the moon they were aware of two elderly men engaged in a terrific struggle. One got the other down and killed him, bundling the body through the door into the cave beyond. He then buried the knife with which the deed was done, though curiously enough this detail was observed only by the husband, who actually unearthed a knife afterward at the spot. Both witnesses then saw the murderer pass them, and they followed him into the dining-room, where he drank some brandy, though this action was seen by the wife and not by the husband. He then took off his boots, exactly as the nurse had already described. With his boots in his hand he ascended the stairs and passed through the panel as he had done so often before, the inference being that on each previous occasion the scene in the cellar had preceded his advent.

INQUIRY now showed that many years ago the house had been inhabited by two brothers who amassed considerable wealth by smuggling. They had hoarded their money in partnership, but one of them finally announced his intention of getting married, which involved his drawing his share of the treasure.



## True Ghost Stories - VI By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

### A House on the Cornish Coast The Farmer who Killed His Son Trees that Looked Like Tapestry

Son afterward this brother disappeared, and it was rumored that he had gone to sea upon a long voyage.

So far as I remember (for I write with only notes of the episode before me), the other brother went mad and the affair was never cleared up in his lifetime. It should be added that the panel into which the vision disappeared concealed a large cupboard which might well have been the treasure house of the establishment. The graphic touch of the boots carried in the hand suggests that there was some housekeeper or other resident who might be disturbed by the sound of the murderer's footsteps.

In this case one can certainly imagine that in so fratricidal a strife there would be a peculiar intensity of emotion on the part of both the actors, which would leave a marked record if anything could do so. That the record was indeed very marked is shown by the fact that the sight was not reserved for people with psychic qualities (like the first two instances, recorded in the July issue of this magazine), but that the husband, the wife, and the nurse, all saw the apparition, which must therefore have been particularly solid

even after the lapse of so many years. It might, I think, be put forward as a hypothesis supplementary to that of thought-forms thrown off in times of crisis, that the permanency and solidity of the form depend upon the extremity of the emotion.

A SECOND illustration may be drawn from Mrs. Tweedale's reminiscences. I am taking my cases from a limited number of books, for the sake of convenience in reference, but they are typical of very many others.

The most absurd of the many absurd charges against Spiritualism is that it has no literature. It has actually a literature with which no other religion could attempt to compare, and it may safely be said that if an assiduous reader were to devour nothing else for fifty years he would be very far from having got to the end of it. Its quality is not on a par with its quantity, but even there I would undertake to name fifty books on the scientific and religious sides of spiritualism which would outweigh in interest, dignity, and brain power an equal list from any other philosophy. Yet the public is kept absolutely ignorant of the greater part of these remarkable works, many of which will one day be world-famous. The people who acted and wrote in the Apostolic epoch of the Christian Church little thought how their actions would appear two thousand years later; and certainly the supercilious philosophers and scandalized high priests would have been much astonished to know of the changed values which time has created.

THIS specific illustration, however, concerns the doings in a shooting lodge in Argyllshire, inhabited in 1802 by Major and Mrs. Stewart, the latter being the sister of Mrs. Tweedale.

The starting point of this haunting was a situation which would form a grim theme for a novelist.

An elderly farmer, who was a widower with a grown-up son, married a young girl. His son soon learned to love his stepmother and the love may have been passionately returned. The result was a struggle in which the son was killed by the father. It is not to be wondered at that so horrible an event should leave a great psychic disturbance behind it, and the lodge was found to be a storm center of the unknown forces.

The phenomena, which seem to have occurred every night, took the form of loud thuds and crashes, especially in a certain room on the upper floor, which had probably been a bedroom. Footsteps resounded down the stairs and upon one occasion the whole terrible light was enacted in the passage, with all the blows and curses of the infuriated men. The tragedy may well have begun upstairs, the guilty son having fled to the door, and been overtaken by his father in the hall below. The impressions seem to have been entirely auditory, though a clairvoyant would no doubt have witnessed the scene even as it occurred.

This case closely resembles the last in that the most furious human passions must have been aroused, so that every condition existed for a permanent psychic record. It (Continued on page 79)

store—a chance friend of Susan's in the old days who, in spite of the fact that he knew her story, has long been urging Susan to become his wife. At the sound of his voice behind her, Susan crumples up in a heap on the floor, and Sam Wright seizes his chance to slink quietly away.

But Sam Wright intends to have his revenge. He carries bad news back to Sutherland and Susan's aunt and uncle, who had lost track of her the night she ran away from Job Ferguson. Susan, he says, is a model of Spencer's, and goes out every night with

the bugles . . . and that isn't the worst . . .

But when the Warhams come down to Cincinnati to ask Spencer to discharge Susan "to save the family name from shame" they find that, already married to her, he is staunch in her defense. "Will you say to Sam Wright, please," he says, "that Susan Lenox is the finest, gamest, bravest little woman that ever battled to a finish with Fate—that her soul is as white as his is black—and that her husband will be in Sutherland soon to teach him a lesson he'll never forget? . . ."

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(Continued from page 40)

should be added that in this latter instance four Pomeranian dogs in the house were reduced to abject terror, showing that there was no hallucination upon the part of the human observers.

These instances which have been quoted have all sprung from scenes of emotion, and all represent, as I venture to suggest, mere shadow forms detached from the real personality.

There is another class of cases, however, which produce much the same result, since haunting forms are seen, but which differ utterly in its nature, in that the forms appear to be the actual materialized spirits of the dead held fast by their thoughts and desires to some spot which they have loved upon earth. Such a haunting would probably seem to no means unpleasant to them, and might only mean that in the interval of such duties as they might feel awaiting them in a new life, they loved to return to the old happy scene of their earth memories.

One excellent and typical example of what I mean was the case of the old Kent manor house as detailed by Mr. Dale Owen.

THE narrative concerns Rimbald Manor

House, near Leigh in Kent, and was recorded in 1857. The house was inhabited by the family of a British general who were much disturbed by noises at night and other happenings. A clairvoyant young lady, who came as a visitor, was able to give them some information, her experience bearing out the rule already stated, that psychic hearing is easier and more common than psychic sight. She could see where the threnes could only hear.

The ghosts who presented themselves were an elderly couple, dressed as in a bygone age, who actually stood upon the threshold to welcome her. After several meetings, they spoke to her, and this marks a difference from all the shadow forms already described, none of which showed any sign of individual thought and speech. These old people explained that they had once lived in the Manor House and that their name on earth was Children. They declared that they had idealized their property, that its improvement was the center of their thoughts and that they were now grieved to see that it had passed into the hands of strangers.

It was a case where total absorption in an earthly thing, however innocent, had become a fatal bar to spiritual advancement—a danger against which we must all earnestly guard. Their voices as they spoke seemed normal to the young lady, while the point lace upon the beautifully beaded dress was imprinted in her memory.

The living lady of the house was a lifeless afterward to confirm the statement of her clairvoyant friend, for she also saw the female vision with the name "Dame Children" written above her in letters of phosphoric fire, together with a statement that she was "earthbound."

For some time diligent inquiry could not find any trace of a family of this unusual name having ever occupied the house, but finally a very old woman was found who in her youth had met an aged man who said that in his boyhood he had helped in the kitchen of the Children family.

Mr. Dale Owen was so interested in the case that he personally investigated it and cross-examined all the witnesses. On asking the young lady whether the ghost had said anything else of an evidential nature, she remembered that Richard was given as the name of the man and that the date 1753 was associated with his death. The costumes were Queen Anne or early Georgian.

Following up his researches Mr. Dale Owen discovered that George was the usual Christian name in the Children family, but finally, in an old Kent newspaper under the date 1773, he found an account of the manor house which ended with the words:

"Richard Children Esq<sup>r</sup> resided here and died possessed of it in 1753 aged 83 years. He was succeeded in it by . . . George Children, who is the present possessor."

THIS narrative must carry conviction with it to any reasonable mind, though I must refer the reader to Dale Owen's "Footfalls" for the smaller details which mean so much. It suggests that the whole range of hauntings of this nature spring from undue preoccupation and want of spiritual effort. One such case seems to carry more warning than all the warnings that ever were spoken.

Cases still still abate themselves, however, which disturb the tidiness of the best ordered theories, and I do not know a more baffling one than that which is treated by two English schoolmistresses, and admirably described in their little book called "An Adventure."

THIS adventure, shortly told, consisted in the fact that during a visit to Paris they entered the gardens of Versailles in order to see the Grand Trianon, and that while in those gardens they had a most extraordinary experience, which in the case of one of the ladies was repeated with variations upon the occasion of a second visit.

They suddenly appeared to be in the Gardens as they were a century before, at the time of the French Revolution, and to see, and in some cases actually speak with, gardeners, messengers and others who were there in the days of Marie Antoinette. So natural was it all, beginning and ending with normal life, that the ladies hardly realized what had happened to them until they began to compare notes, and realized that some of the buildings and garden arrangements which they had seen had not existed within the memory of man.

Both ladies carried away a clear remembrance of dignified officials in gray green coats and small three-cornered hats, of an intensely still landscape, of trees that looked like tapestry, of clouded, large-busted figures, of a running messenger who shouted instructions to them, of a long-winded, full-skirted lady with pale green ribbon, of a jaunty young footman, and other quite definite details—all this at four o'clock of a summer afternoon. A second visit by one lady alone, some four months later, produced similar effects, differing in detail but not in general character from the first.

SUCH an experience is so very unlike the vast majority of psychic cases that one is loath to push it aside. If one can not get a document into a pigeonhole, one is too ready with a waste-paper basket, and it is this human tendency which has retarded our advance in this new science.

Anyone who carefully reads the narrative of these ladies, and notices the points of resemblance, and also the very interesting points of divergence in their stories, can not fail to take them seriously. It was not imagination or suggestion or, as far as one can judge, hallucination. But what it was, and why by some strange psychic refraction this mirage of the past should be thrown down upon the present, is an insoluble problem. It must at least teach us that, however much our tiny brains may endeavor to comprehend and classify these extraordinary phenomena, there still remain so many unknown causes and unexplained conditions that for many long years to come, our best efforts can only be regarded as well-meant approximations to the truth.

WILL spiritualism help in crime-detection? The facts of a mysterious murder are turned up by spirit messages in "The Strange Happenings at Hylverville"—Hurst's for October.



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